

ABOUT GROWTH

A Quarterly Publication About Growth Management

Fall 1999



**WASHINGTON STATE
COMMUNITY, TRADE AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
Building Foundations for the Future



Seattle's comprehensive plan — Monitoring our progress

By Julie Burman
Manager, Urban Sustainability Initiative, City of Seattle

Seattle's comprehensive plan *Toward a Sustainable Seattle* contains policies that guide decisions as to where growth and change should be encouraged. Adopted in 1994 and covering a 20-year period, it sets goals to ensure that Seattle continues to be attractive to businesses and households of all types.

The comprehensive plan's policies recognize the city's responsibility to accommodate additional growth, discourage urban sprawl, promote more efficient use of land resources, and protect our region's natural resources.

The plan views the city as a single tapestry whose individual threads — land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities, utilities, economic development, neighborhood planning, and human development — work together to achieve sustainability.

Getting there from here

The comprehensive plan is designed to adapt to changing conditions. Working with community groups, the city tracks more than 25 indicators directly tied to comprehensive plan goals, such as population growth and transit ridership.

The indicators were chosen to reflect Seattle's status under each of the compre-

hensive plan's core values — community, environmental stewardship, economic opportunity, and social equity.

The first report on the comprehensive plan indicators, *Monitoring our Progress*, was published in 1996. It was updated in 1998 and will be published again in 2001 after census data is available. Information for the indicators comes from a variety of sources including the U.S. Census, Puget Sound Regional Council, state Office of Financial Management, citywide residential surveys, and Seattle city departments.

Seattle's indicators are coordinated with those being used by the King County

Growth Management Planning Council to assess the city's contribution to the county-wide growth vision as well as our own.

By tracking the indicators, the city can pinpoint trouble spots and focus attention on emerging issues. For example, the indicators could help spotlight the need to develop

programs that would promote home ownership or tree preservation.

Seattle's Mayor Paul Schell says, "We set goals and then get periodic report cards on our performance. As a community we can collectively work on what matters most — for now and for our children's future."

Seattle has learned, over time, lessons about indicators that echo what we hear from many other communities: measure



Seattle tracks more than 25 indicators to help the city focus on meeting current and future needs.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF SEATTLE

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Published quarterly by the Washington State Community, Trade and Economic Development, Growth Management Program, 906 Columbia St. SW, Olympia, WA 98504-8300. The program administers the state's Growth Management Act. Its role under the GMA is to assist and enable local governments to design their own programs to fit local needs and opportunities.

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Benchmarks for growth management

By Shane Hope

Managing Director, CTED Growth Management Program

Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA) is just past its ninth birthday. People sometimes ask us what has been achieved during this period. Many answers could be given — from facts about the number of counties and cities that have adopted growth plans to facts about the state's economy, housing starts, or water quality. But no statewide "smart growth" benchmarks program yet exists to tell the story.

Fortunately, some Washington communities have set their own benchmarks and indicators for growth management (or related concepts, like livability). A few excellent examples are described in this publication.

Benchmarks give people a way to help measure — with numerical data — their community's progress in achieving key goals. More communities are likely to take this approach in the future. At the same time, it would be useful to have a big picture that includes statewide benchmarks for smart growth and be able to see how we are doing over the next 10 years or so.

If we had benchmarks or indicators statewide, what should they be? Your ideas are invited.

For example, we could start with GMA goals. There are 14 of them, counting the shoreline goal that was added in 1997. Perhaps one benchmark or indicator could be named for each GMA goal. Consider a few possibilities with this approach.

For the goal about reducing sprawl, an indicator might be the percentage of growth that is going into urban growth areas. For the natural resources goal, an indicator might be the amount of farmland that is

being converted to urban uses. The environmental goal indicator could measure salmon recovery or, perhaps, improvement in air quality. The housing indicator could show the cost of housing compared to income levels. Other goals would have other indicators or benchmarks.

Different approaches are possible, too. Local benchmark programs could be checked to see if they have any common

indicators; maybe they would offer a basis for a statewide approach. Or we can identify what data is already available about certain quality of life factors and select the most appropriate ones to track for healthy growth. Any option requires thoughtfulness and long-term commitment.

In the upcoming months, CTED will be sponsoring forums to explore benchmark ideas and to focus on the next phase of growth management.

What has been accomplished so far, and what should happen in Washington's future? Public discussion about this is vital.

It has been said: Goals that get measured get accomplished. As Washington's growth continues, we face many choices that will shape livability in the 21st century. At the very least, setting goals and measuring progress can help us know if we are getting where we intended to go. Deciding about benchmarks is an important next step.



PHOTO / RITA R. ROBISON

Monitoring growth in Central Puget Sound Region

By Norman Abbott

Principal Planner, Puget Sound Regional Council

The Puget Sound Regional Council has developed the basic ingredients for a system to monitor growth in the Central Puget Sound Region.

So far, the work has produced two regional review reports, issued in 1997 and 1998. These reports attempt to track patterns and progress in meeting the objectives of the Growth Management Act and VISION 2020, the region's growth management, economic, and transportation strategy.

The 1997 and 1998 Regional Review reports monitor change in population, jobs, housing, transportation measures, and income. They present a variety of indicators of change in an attempt to assess progress toward achieving growth management objectives.

For example, there has been a decrease in the percentage of building permits issued outside the urban growth area (from 25 percent in 1995 to 20 percent in 1997), which may indicate some regional progress. King County in particular shows success in this area: the percentage of permits issued outside the

urban growth area (UGA) is lowest in King County, and showed a decrease from 13 percent to 8 percent between 1995 and 1997.

While there are many examples of successes, there are also indications that policies have not yet been successful. For example, the policy of promoting population and job growth in 21 designated urban centers is showing varied results in part due to variation in the centers themselves. The designated urban centers contain only 2 percent of the land area within the UGA but contain nearly 30 percent of the region's jobs and 5 percent of its population. Each urban center is unique in its character, history, and development pattern, and it would not be expected that each would experience the same mix and rate of growth.

Some centers truly support mixed-use activities, already provide the densities needed to support various alternative modes of transportation, and have established attractive pedestrian environments. Other centers are just beginning to develop these characteristics.

Monitoring informs us that four centers, Downtown Seattle, Downtown Bellevue, Renton, and Lynnwood, have

added over 1,000 jobs since 1995. On the other hand, six centers have lost employment. Eight centers have added more than 200 housing units each since 1995, while seven others show little change in housing.

Because of different starting points, progress in centers needs to be measured with different yardsticks.

Another success is the Vision 2020 Award program. Each year the Puget Sound Regional Council presents VISION 2020 awards for truly innovative projects and programs that help promote a livable region and achieve our region's growth and transportation strategy. A total of 16 awards have been given over the past three years.

The variables that affect growth interact in complex ways that are dependent on public policy, private sector behavior, and external variables such as the global economy. For the most part, the data are inconclusive. It is simply too early to reach many conclusions about the effect of public policies on growth.

For more information, or a copy of *1998 Regional Review—Monitoring Change in the Central Puget Sound Region*, contact the Regional Council's Information Center at 206-464-7532.



Sumner's Daffodil Neighborhood — a walkable community with neo-traditional single-family homes, cottages, live-work units, and a pedestrian-oriented elementary school — received a 1999 VISION 2020 Award.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PSRC

Awards to honor innovation in Puget Sound region

The Puget Sound Regional Council is seeking nominations for its annual VISION 2020 Awards, which recognize outstanding efforts that help manage growth, improve transportation, and make central Puget Sound communities better places to live.

Nominations should be innovative and creative projects or programs in King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. Nominations may be developed by either the public or private sector, or through public/private partnerships. The deadline is December 31, 1999. The awards will be presented in March 2000 at the annual meeting of the Puget Sound Regional Council.

For information, contact Anne Avery at 206-587-4818 or e-mail: aavery@psrc.org.

Benchmarking program helps decision makers evaluate planning policies

By Cynthia Moffitt
Policy Analyst, King County

King County's county-wide planning policies define the county-wide vision for the county and cities' plans as required by the Growth Management Act. The policies were developed by the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC), a group of 15 elected officials, representing all King County citizens, adopted by the Metropolitan King County Council, and ratified by the cities in 1994.

The county-wide planning policies are primarily goals that, if properly implemented, should improve the quality of life in King County during the next 20 years.

When the members of the GMPC approved the policies, they expressed an interest in creating a system that would tell future decision makers whether or not the policies are achieving their intended outcomes. The *1999 Benchmark Report* is the fourth annual account to monitor the county-wide planning policies.

The purpose of creating a benchmark system is to provide the GMPC, other policy makers, and the public with a method for evaluating jurisdictions' progress in implementing the county-wide planning policies. The system for the benchmark report was established by stating the outcomes of the county-wide planning policies; selecting relevant indicators for each outcome; and then identifying quantifiable levels of achievement, or targets, for some of the indicators.

Why a benchmark report for the county-wide planning policies?

Generally, the indicators that the benchmark committee has produced should be used as the GMPC originally intended: to enable future decision makers to determine whether or not the county-wide planning policies are being

implemented in a way that achieves their intended outcomes.

The benchmark system, which includes these indicators, should also provide early warning if the policies are not having their desired effects. In that case, the system should provide sufficient information to enable policymakers to determine whether different actions to implement the policies are needed, or whether minor or major revisions to the policies are required. More specifically, the benchmark system should be used to help the jurisdictions of King County establish priorities, take joint actions, and direct resources to solve problems identified in the county-wide planning policies.

Data sources in the benchmark report

The benchmark program staff strives to provide the best data available for the indicators to track the county-wide planning policies as adopted in 1994. In order to ensure data reliability, the benchmark program staff revises and, if necessary, corrects data on an annual basis when new and better sources become available.

Indicators



ECONOMICS

- 1 Real wages per worker
- 2 Personal and median household income: King County compared to the United States
- 3 Percentage of population below the poverty level
- 4 New businesses created
- 5 New jobs created by employment sector
- 6 Employment in industries that export from the region
- 7 Educational background of adult population
- 8 High school graduation rate



ENVIRONMENT

- 9 Land cover changes in urban and rural areas over time
- 10 Air quality
- 11 Energy consumption
- 12 Vehicle miles traveled per year
- 13 Surface water and groundwater quality
- 14 Water consumption

- 15 Change in groundwater levels
- 16 Change in wetland acreage and functions
- 17 Continuity of terrestrial and aquatic habitat networks
- 18 Change in number of salmon
- 19 Rate of increase in noise from vehicles, planes, and yard equipment
- 20 Pounds of waste disposed and recycled per capita



HOUSING

- 21 Supply and demand for affordable housing
- 22 Percent of income paid for housing
- 23 Homelessness
- 24 Home purchase affordability gap for buyers
- 25 Home ownership rate
- 26 Apartment vacancy rate
- 27 Trend of housing costs vs. income
- 28 Public dollars spent for low-income housing
- 29 Housing affordable to low-income households



LAND USE

- 30 New housing units in urban areas, rural/resource areas, and urban centers
- 31 Employment in urban and rural/resource areas, urban and manufacturing/industrial centers
- 32 New housing units built through redevelopment
- 33 Ratio of land consumption to population growth
- 34 Ratio of achieved density to allowed density of residential development
- 35 Ratio of land capacity to 20-year job and household targets
- 36 Land with six years of infrastructure capacity
- 37 Acres of urban parks and open space
- 38 Ratio of jobs to housing in Central Puget Sound counties and King County subregions
- 39 Acres in forest land and farm land
- 40 Number and average size of farms



TRANSPORTATION

- 41 Percent of residents who commute one way within 30 minutes
- 42 Transit trips per person
- 43 Percent of residents who use alternatives to the single occupant vehicle
- 44 Ability of goods and services to move efficiently and cost effectively through the region
- 45 Number of lane miles of city, county, and state roads in need of repair and preservation

Keeping track of progress in achieving a vision

By Emmett Dobey

Manager, Policy and Program Development
Division, Public Works Department, City of Olympia, and

Steve Hall

Assistant City Manager, City of Olympia

A key question for Olympia and other communities is how to keep track of whether they are making progress toward the vision contained in the comprehensive plan.

In 1996, two years after the city adopted its comprehensive plan, the city staff, the Olympia Planning Commission, and the Olympia City Council began development of a *Capital Facilities Plan Progress Report*. The report is intended to measure progress of the city toward meeting the goals of its comprehensive plan. The report focuses on those comprehensive plan policies that can be accomplished, in whole or in part, through the completion of capital projects, such as construction of sidewalks on high-use pedestrian routes or completion of bicycle routes in the city's 18-year Bicycle Master Plan.

The city chose measures where information was readily available, where the results would be meaningful to policymakers and decision makers, and that could be graphically displayed to show whether or not progress was being made toward eventual goals. Each year since 1996, the council has updated the Progress Report and added new categories to broaden this monitoring tool.

In addition to tracking capital facility plan progress, the city also has developed a set of community-wide quality of life indicators.

In 1990, the state released the *Washington Environment 2010 Action Plan*. The plan was a long-term approach defining what a sustainable future for Washington might be. Attempting to involve local communities in the 2010 planning process, the city of Olympia was selected to develop a project illustrating how sustainability

could be attained at a community level. In response, the city:

- Incorporated the theme of sustainability into the comprehensive plan so issues of growth management and long-term community sustainability could be discussed together.
- Developed a sustainability philosophy.
- Developed an evaluation tool to measure the sustainability of specific city actions.
- Developed a set of indicators measuring the city's success over time to becoming a more sustainable community.

The city published its first indicators report in 1994. Additional reports were published in 1996 and 1998. The indicator report has become the *State of the City Report*.

The report is organized around nine stress factors or pressure points linked with community growth and change. The indicators measure the social, economic, political, and environmental aspects and acknowledge the interdependent nature of the factors.

The nine indicators — land use, transportation, air quality, water, solid waste, energy, economy and housing, public health and safety, and community participation — were selected because they appeared to measure key sustainability parameters. In addition, data-collecting mechanisms tracking each of the indicators were in place, and there seemed to be a commitment to continue monitoring these pressure point areas.

The report attempts to tie each indicator to a comprehensive plan goal; presents in simple terms and graphs the status of the indicator; indicates how the particular indicator is linked to the other pressure points; gives examples how the city is taking action to address concerns identified by the indicator; and illustrates how citizens can act to improve

the current and future community climate.

The *State of the City Report* is published every other year. The intervening year is used to gather and update data, assess whether the indicators are measuring the outcome expected, and determine the need for development of new indicators.

The indicators used in the report are intended to measure trends over time. The report is now being used primarily as a public information tool to assist in defining sustainability. The report is used to generate discussion between citizens and city officials about the community's vision for Olympia's future.

Seattle's comprehensive plan — Monitoring our progress

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what's important and set good systems for data collection.

Sustainability in Seattle... from report card to collective action

Schell and Councilmember Richard Conlin have advanced the concept by launching the Urban Sustainability Initiative. Seattle's indicators will now be used to measure progress in achieving the goals of the comprehensive plan. Aside from our work and King County's efforts, a non-profit group known as Sustainable Seattle published the internationally acclaimed *Indicators of Sustainable Community*.

We're beginning the conversation as part of this initiative. How do you get the most out of both sets of indicators? How do you improve their usefulness? How can you infuse them into the mainstream of public debate?

We will engage a range of partners — King County and Sustainable Seattle as a start, but also the state, schools, labor, business, tribes, environmentalists, and others — and call for collective action.

Yakima County's plan effectiveness tracking program



Yakima County prepares reports on progress in meeting the goals of its comprehensive plan, including goals related to agriculture and recreation.

By Elaine Taylor

Long-Range Division Manager, Yakima County Planning Department

Yakima County recognizes the importance of maintaining a Buildable Lands Program.

Yakima's county-wide planning policies, adopted in 1993, state that the county and cities will cooperatively determine the amount of undeveloped buildable urban land needed, and that the inventory of the undeveloped buildable urban land supply will be maintained in a regional GIS data base. The policies also commit the county and cities to establishing a common method to monitor urban development to evaluate the rate of growth and to maintain an inventory of the amount of buildable land remaining.

Since plan adoption in 1997, however, competing priorities have limited the county's development of a formal system for tracking land use changes to capturing and storing the records that will be needed to conduct the five-year comprehensive plan update in 2002.

Back-up tapes from the county's GIS were archived at the beginning and end of 1998, and will be archived again at the end of 1999. These include the aerial photography that was flown in 1992, and will include the color aerials that were flown in 1998. A permanent backup of the assessor's database is also archived annually.

We also use a Permit Tracking System, and have created a GIS planning history layer that functions as an electronic "overlay" to record and locate planning actions. Our objective is to develop both snapshot data and maps and annual data totals.

Our next step is to identify the data that will provide

benchmarks for evaluating the success of the county's plan and regulations.

In the interim, to meet the requirements of WAC 365-195-600 (Public Participation Procedures), we have prepared various reports for the planning commission and the public on how implementation of the plan is progressing.

A narrative staff report addressed issues such as progress in meeting the goals of the plan; public acceptance of the plan; effectiveness of the plan in combination with the emergency ordinance; policies awaiting implementation; progress on development regulations; consistency of administrative and quasi-judicial decisions with plan policies; trends; problems; and unresolved issues.

We also summarized and analyzed all 1998 (and 1999 to meeting date) hearing examiner recommendations and decisions, and prepared a summary analysis of issues raised in hearing examiner cases. In addition, we prepared a statistical summary of files processed, by case type.

Yakima County has been following the development of state guidelines for tracking buildable lands, and will probably use them in preparing for the five-year plan update. We are also concerned, however, with tracking our success in achieving the other goals in our comprehensive plan, and will be trying to find ways to evaluate and quantify our progress.

PHOTOS / RITA R. ROBISON



Local governments gearing up for buildable lands analysis

By Shane Hope

Managing Director, CTED Growth Management Program

An amendment to Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1997 requires many fast-growing communities to monitor their urban densities, land supply, and other factors, and every five years, to evaluate the effectiveness of their growth management programs to achieve planning goals.

With the first evaluation due in 2002, some people have wondered what to expect. Key facts, below, help to explain.

Currently, the requirement applies to six counties (Snohomish, King, Pierce, Kitsap, Thurston, and Clark) and the cities within them. That adds up to 102 jurisdictions, covering 7,600 square miles. One of the main drivers for this legislation was an interest in knowing whether the buildable land supply was adequate for growth needs. All of the counties have adopted comprehensive plans and a geographic information system (GIS) that allow them to track land use information.

While the law provides general direction about the kind of information to track, a coordinated local/state effort was needed to develop more specifics. Hard-working representatives from local governments advised CTED in crafting guidelines. (Called *Buildable Lands Program Guidelines—Working Draft*, the publication is available by calling CTED at 360-753-2222.)

The result is an approach to tracking land supply and land use trends that provides a basis for consistency among the many different jurisdictions and a framework for consistent definitions and methodologies among state agencies grappling with similar data needs.

Counties and cities began collecting information during the first year. They started by updating their parcel and land use data and collecting permit data. That effort has continued, with refinements, during the second year. CTED provided funding and guidance on interpreting GMA requirements.

Although data gathering is underway, the first five-year evaluation is not due until September 1, 2002. At that point, local govern-

ments must have analyzed information about whether development patterns are consistent with the vision articulated in their plan and regulations. They will submit their reports and begin deciding about any changes needed to make their plans and regulations match up with the development trends. Changes must be monitored for effectiveness.

The scope of this effort is tremendous. Although other places have experimented with buildable lands programs (notably, Oregon), no one else in the United States has a program that coordinates the level and scope of data as Washington does.

Housing conference to feature top national, regional speakers

Architect and professor Avi Freidman of McGill University and Bruce Katz of the Brookings Institute are two of the top speakers who will address housing issues at the statewide affordable housing conference — Housing Washington 1999: Join Forces, Increase Choices — November 1-2 at the Doubletree Hotel-Seattle Airport.

Join more than 500 architecture, planning, development, affordable housing, and financial professionals who will be exploring affordable housing needs and solutions.

CTED and the Washington State Housing Finance Commission are sponsoring the conference.

For more information, call 800-767-HOME (ext. 4336), e-mail: conference@bombar.com, or visit the website at www.wshfc.org/conf.

Smart growth conference

You are invited to attend the conference "Smart Growth in the Western States" November 18 and 19 in San Diego.

Participants will learn about tools for creating vibrant, pedestrian- and transit-friendly communities in the West to conserve stunning landscapes, farmland, air and water quality, local economies, and quality of life.

CTED is one of the cosponsors of the conference.

To receive a brochure, call 800-290-8202.

Get the latest information on statewide infrastructure financing

The *State of Washington Local Government Infrastructure Study*, featured in an article in the Summer 1999 issue of *About Growth*, is now available.

The study estimates the need for local government-financed infrastructure statewide (bridges, roadways, domestic water, sanitary sewer, and storm water systems) for the six-year period 1998 through 2003 at \$8.16 billion.

To obtain a copy, call the Public Works Board at 360-586-4172.

Oregon: A leader in benchmarking programs

By Rita R. Robison

Editor, About Growth

An Oregon agency charged with keeping a benchmarking report card for the state gives Oregon an **A** for new companies and an **F** for employment dispersion. It also gives our neighboring state an **A** for agricultural, forest land, and wetland preservation and an **F** for wild salmon and steelhead restoration.

The Oregon Progress Board keeps track of a broad range of economic, social, and environmental indicators, 92 in all, called benchmarks.

Benchmark performance targets are set for the years 2000 and 2010. The progress board sets performance targets in consultation with citizens, policymakers, and issue experts. Grades, added for the first time to the 1999 report, show how "on track" Oregon is in achieving the year 2000 benchmark performance target.

The board is responsible for developing and implementing a state strategy for Oregon called Oregon Shines. By

tracking and reporting on a set of measurable indicators, the Legislature and citizens of Oregon can see just how the state is doing in achieving the goals set out in the plan.

The board issues a report every two years to the Legislature that is also distributed to the public and state agencies. This year's report is called *Achieving the Oregon Shines Vision: The 1999 Benchmarks Performance Report*.

Oregon's 92 benchmarks are divided into seven categories: economic performance, education, civic engagement, social support, public safety, community development, and environment. Examples of benchmarks include per capita infant mortality, vehicle miles traveled, and water quality.

A number of the benchmarks relate to growth management issues such as land preservation, traffic, environmental quality, and infrastructure.

One benchmark tracks the loss of agricultural lands, said Jeffrey Tryens, executive director of the progress board. "We want to maintain our agricultural

land base and have 90 percent of what we had in 1970 in 2000. As best we can tell, this goal is being met."

The Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development, the agency that administers Oregon's growth management efforts, has its own set of land use goals, but it does attempt to be in harmony with the benchmarks, Tryens said.

The progress board does not set policy or make decisions on how to allocate resources, he added. "We look at the data. We draft goals and ask people what they think. We keep the benchmarks all in one place."

Tryens said Oregon's benchmarking is important to public policy making in the state. "Benchmarks have value for state government as a way to get all agencies aimed the same way, using a set of common elements. Using Oregon Shines, the benchmarks offer a way to develop shared opportunities and a quantifiable way to evaluate success. When we want to know what we have done as a state, we say, 'Well, let's look at the benchmarks.'"



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